A U M

After scrutiny, believe what you have yourself experienced and perceived as reasonable, that accords with the good of yourself and of others. —KALAMA SUTTA

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DESCENT AND TRANSCENDENCE

And now, O teacher of compassion, point thou the way to other men.
—*The Voice of the Silence*

External types will be the only distinction of the several orders of life; . . . a man if rich will be reputed pure; dishonesty will be the universal means of subsistence, weakness the cause of dependence, menace and presumption will be substituted for learning; liberality will be devotion; mutual assent, marriage; fine clothes, dignity. . . . Thus, in the Kali age will decay constantly proceed, until the human race approaches its annihilation. . . .—*Vayu Purana*

THE reader of *The Secret Doctrine* who gives reflection to this account of the quality of life in the age of Kali, the Black or Iron Age, may be overtaken by a depression which is not altogether relieved by the prediction which follows of a Golden Age said to come later. The accuracy of the Puranic writer's foresight is astonishing, as if the description were written by a contemporary, rather than by one who lived thousands of years ago. More helpful, perhaps, than the futurism which depends upon the "law of cycles" to change the quality of the age is the simple assurance of William Q. Judge, that while nothing can be done "against" the Kali Yuga, a lot can be done *in* it.

Apart from the moral confusion which pervades Kali Yuga, one great and necessary process of life is obviously going on at the same time—a vast reshuffling of the classes of human intelligence. It is of interest that the break-up of the caste system in India—the ancient home of the Fifth Root Race—is now proceeding as a method of *reform;* whereas, in the old prophecies, the "confusion" of caste is said to be a condition produced by Kali Yuga.

No doubt the confusion of caste occurs in Kali Yuga, at the time when "The Mlechchas will be in the centre and the Aryas in the end," but it may be wondered if this is not preparatory to a sort of human growth which is not possible under the classical arrangements of a Golden Age. In Kali Yuga, the marks of human greatness are hidden from view, and standards are inverted. In these circumstances, if truth is to be recognized, the vision of it must come without assistance from any familiar standard or guide: only truth already possessed or suspected will be the touchstone of the truths we need to learn.

Even the modern political philosophy of our time reflects, from the viewpoint of the Eternal Verities, the confusion of the orders of life. It is natural for those schooled in the values of progressive thought to wonder a bit about the idea of King-Initiates. Kings enjoy no special prestige among those brought up in the democratic tradition, and if the magic word "initiate" can remove the unpleasant flavor of the word "king," thus satisfying the intuition, the puzzlement of the rational faculty ought not to be left without some relief.

It seems plain enough that the idea of kings—and of those best of kings, the King-Initiates—relates properly to a time when the order of human relations expresses on earth those higher metaphysical relations of souls under the rule of the eternal evolutionary process. Try as we will, we cannot expurgate from our literature the romance and splendor of the idea of royalty. It strikes a note which our liberal philosophy may not recognize, but to which the hearts of children, and older folk, too, cannot help but respond.

Our childhood was enwrapped with tales implying "station" in life, and while the worldly wisdom of the grown-up world replaces the hierarchical arrangements of fairy tale, myth, and legend with other more "practical" accounts of the division of honor and degree among men, these colorful literary relics of an ancient past are continually revived by story-tellers.

But how shall we evaluate the high defiance of order and degree by the democrats and all lovers of "equality"? Even as we admit the excesses of the levelling instinct—its blindness to the subtler sorts of human excellence, its chaining to the low floor of economic achievement most of our definitions of "success"—there remains a basic validity in the claims made in behalf of man without distinction. When all the signs of goodness, truth, and beauty have been torn down, in the war on oppressive tradition, and after the aristocrats have been made

to mop the floors and coddle the vulgar offspring of merchant princes, it will still be possible for the lessons of life to be learned—which are now to be learned only in the hard way.

After the Kali Yuga has had its sway, men—all men—find themselves truly on their egoic own. It is then that the injunction, "Hold fast to that which has neither substance nor existence," ceases to be a mystic challenge, becoming a rule of human survival. When the world is full of noisy liars and pretenders, the man who discovers the truth will nevermore be deceived. And the man who will work for truth in these perilous times—he is indeed the servant, some day to become the master, of a wholly inward tradition.

How can a world haunted by the bewilderments of Kali Yuga be helped to find the truth? What will a teacher of these times do for his fellow men? Students of Theosophy do not lack for examples. There is a curious combination of qualities in the work of both H. P. Blavatsky and William Q. Judge. Both embodied a perfect observance of the Buddhist rule to say to others, "Thus have I heard," drawing no special attention to themselves, yet both seemed to speak with an authority which gained its strength from personal conviction. This is a balance for which there can be no written formula. It is dependence upon the truth itself, and truth finds its own appropriate expression as time and circumstances demand. Fundamentally, this balance doubtless comes from honesty with oneself, and therefore inevitably, with all others.

At first, the man who resolves upon this kind of integrity suffers all the anguish of a spiritual adolescence. He is most mindful of himself when he would be most forgetful. Yet if the intention is itself honest, there must come at last a freedom from the cloying presence of one's personal nature. A joy in the work, in thinking and understanding, will surely bring that unself-consciousness which is longed for, and which is the prerequisite of all good teaching.

The tell-tale mark of personality clings with annoying vigor so long as the hopeful one agonizes with himself, asking, "What am I *supposed* to say, to do, in *this* situation?" Here, most plainly, is identified, the shadow of ancient hierarchy, in precisely the terms that Kali Yuga exists to drive away. For the world of the Iron Age can never be helped by those who are attentive to what they are "supposed" to say or do. This is the rule of psychic discipline, not of the soul, which looks directly on ideas.

The elimination of the personal idea is also elimination of the psychic supports for guidance in what is right and true. And in the Kali Yuga, he is a teacher who cleaves, whether by instinct or deliberation, to the freedom which seeks knowledge for itself, and not in conformity to the correct tradition. For the world is in process of destroying its traditions, by perverting them beyond recall. The method of tradition is the method of recognition of sign and degree, and these are all betrayed in Kali Yuga.

It is said that *The Bhagavad-Gita* is a book written for the men of Kali Yuga. Hence, perhaps, its stress on mystery, on secret knowledge. The man who finds the truth in Kali Yuga is indeed a diviner of secrets —the secrets of his own heart. And since this age is best thought of as a time of reckoning and testing, when the strength of mankind must turn to inner things, or be lost, it is the Theosophic tradition that truth is found within, that the best teachers are those who help men to search their own hearts. It is a matter, then, of learning, first, to trust one's own heart, and this is the practice of the virtues of the soul.

A METHOD IN EVENTS

Events germinate and unfold. They have a past which is connected with their present, and we feel a well-justified confidence that a future is appointed which will be similarly connected with the present and the past. This continuity and unity of history repeat themselves before our eyes in all conceivable stages of progress. The phenomena furnish us the grounds for the generalization of two laws which are truly *principles of scientific divination,* by which alone the human mind penetrates the sealed records of the past and the unopened pages of the future. The first of these is the law of evolution, or, to phrase it for our purpose, *the law of correlated successiveness or organized history in the individual,* illustrated in the changing phases of every maturing system of results. . . . These thoughts summon into our immediate presence the measureless past and the measureless future of material history. They seem almost to open vistas through infinity, and to endow the human intellect with an existence and a vision exempt from the limitations of time and space and finite causation. . . .

—PROF. ALEXANDER WINCHELL

THOUGHTS ON KARMA AND REINCARNATION

> In man there are arteries, thin as a hair split a 1,000 times, filled with fluids blue, red, green, yellow, etc. The tenuous involucrum (the base or ethereal frame of the astral body) is lodged in them, and the ideal residues of the experiences of the former embodiments (or incarnations) adhere to the said tenuous involucrum, and *accompany it in its passage from body to body.*
>
> —*Upanishads*

"JUDGE of a man by his questions rather than by his answers," teaches the wily Voltaire. The advice stops half-way in our case. To become complete and cover the whole ground, we have to add, "ascertain the motive which prompts the questioner." A man may offer a query from a sincere impulse to learn and to know. Another person will ask eternal questions, with no better motive than a desire of cavilling and proving his adversary in the wrong.

Not a few among the "inquirers into Theosophy," as they introduce themselves, belong to this latter category. We have found in it Materialists and Spiritualists, Agnostics and Christians. Some of them, though rarely, are "open to conviction"—as they say; others, thinking with Cicero that no liberal, truth-seeking man should ever impute a charge of unsteadiness to anyone for having changed his opinions—become *really* converted and join our ranks. But there are those also—and these form the majority—who, while representing themselves as *inquirers,* are in truth *carpers.* Whether owing to narrowness of mind or foolhardiness they entrench themselves behind their own preconceived and not unseldom shallow beliefs and opinions, and will not budge from them. Such a "seeker" is hopeless, as his desire to investigate the truth is a pretext, not even a fearless mask, but simply a *false nose.* He has neither the open determination of an avowed materialist, nor the serene coolness of a "Sir Oracle." But—

> You may as well
> Forbid the sea for to obey the moon,
> As, or by oath remove, or counsel shake,
> The fabric of his folly . . . .

NOTE.—This article first appeared in *Lucifer* for April, 1889, and was last reprinted in THEOSOPHY, Vol. 30.

Therefore, a "seeker after truth" of this kind had better be severely left alone. He is intractable, because he is either a skin-deep sciolist, a self-opinionated theorist or a fool. As a general rule, he talks reincarnation before he has even learnt the difference between *metempsychosis,* which is the transmigration of a human Soul into an animal form, and Reincarnation, or the rebirth of the same Ego in successive human bodies. Ignorant of the *true* meaning of the Greek word, he does not even suspect how absurd, in philosophy, is this purely exoteric doctrine of transmigrations into animals. Useless to tell him that Nature, propelled by Karma, never recedes, but strives ever forward in her work on the physical plane; that she may lodge a human soul in the body of a man, morally ten times lower than any animal, but she will not reverse the order of her kingdoms; and while leading the irrational monad of a beast of a higher order into the human form at the first hour of a Manvantara, she will not guide that Ego, once it has become a man, even of the lowest kind, back into the animal species—not during that cycle (or Kalpa) at any rate.*

The list of queer "investigators" is by no means exhausted with these amiable *seekers.* There are two other classes—Christians and Spiritualists, the latter being in some respects more formidable than any. The former having been born and bred believers in the Bible and supernatural "miracles" on *authority,* or "thirty-seventh hand evidence," to use a popular proverb, are often forced to yield in the face of the first hand testimony of their own reason and senses; and then they are amenable to reason and conviction. They had formed *à priori* opinions and got crystallized in them as a fly in a piece of amber. But that amber has cracked, and, as one of the signs of the times, they have bethought themselves of a somewhat tardy still sincere search, to either justify their early opinions, or else part company with them for good. Having found out that *their* religion—like that of the great majority of their fellow men—had been founded on *human* not *divine* respect, they come to us as they would to surgical operators, believing that theosophists can remove all the old cobwebs from their bewildered brains. Some-

* Occult Science teaches that the same order of evolution for man and animals—from the first to the seventh planet of a chain, and from the first to the end of the seventh round—takes place on every *chain* of worlds in our Solar system from the inferior to the superior. Thus the highest as the lowest Ego, from the monads selected to people a new chain in a Manvantara, when passing from an inferior to a superior "chain" has, of course, to pass through every animal (and even vegetable) form. But once started on its cycle of births no human Ego will become that of an animal during any period of the seven rounds.—*Vide* SECRET DOCTRINE.

times it does so happen; once made to see the fallacy of first accepting and identifying themselves with any form of belief, and then only seeking, years later, for reasons to justify it, they very naturally try to avoid falling again into the same mistake. They had once to content themselves with such interpretations of their time-honoured dogmas as the fallacy and often the absurdity of the latter would afford; but now, they seek to learn and understand before they believe.

This is the right and purely theosophical state of mind, and is quite consistent with the precept of Lord Buddha, who taught never to believe merely on authority but to test the latter by means of our personal reason and highest intuition. It is only such seekers after the eternal truth who can profit by the lessons of old Eastern Wisdom.

It is our duty, therefore, to help them to defend their new ideals by furnishing them with the most adequate and far-reaching weapons. For they will have to encounter, not only Materialists and Spiritualists, but also to break a lance with their ex-coreligionists. These will bring to bear upon them the whole of their arsenal, composed of the pop-guns of biblical casuistry and interpretations based on the dead-letter texts and the disingenuous translation of *pseudo* revelation. They have to be prepared. They will be told, for instance, that there is not a word in the Bible which would warrant belief in reincarnation, or life, more than once, on this earth. Biologists and physiologists will laugh at such a theory, and assure them that it is opposed by the fact that no man has a glimpse of recollection of any *past* life. Shallow metaphysicians, and supporters of the easy-going Church ethics of this age, will gravely maintain the injustice there would be in a posterior punishment, in the present life, for deeds committed in a previous existence of which we know nothing. All such objections are disposed of and shown fallacious to anyone who studies seriously the esoteric sciences.

But what shall we say of our ferocious opponents, the Kardecists, or the reincarnationists of the French school, and the *anti*-reincarnationists, *i.e.*, most of the Spiritualists of the old school. The fact, that the first believe in rebirth, but in their own crude, unphilosophical way, makes our task the more heavy. They have made up their minds that a man dies, and his "spirit," after a few visits of consultation to the mortals he left behind him, may reincarnate at his own sweet will, in whom and whenever he likes. The Devachanic period of no less than a 1,000, generally 1,500 years, is a vexation of mind and a snare in their

sight. They will have nothing of this. No more will the Spiritualists. These object on the highly philosophical ground that "it is *simply impossible.*" Why? Because it is so unpalatable to most of them, especially to those who know themselves to be the personal Avatar, or the reincarnation of some historically great hero or heroine who flourished within the last few centuries (rebirth from, or into, the slums of Whitechapel, being for them out of question). And "it is so cruel," you see, to tell fond parents that the fancy that a *still-born* child, a daughter of theirs, who, they imagine, having been reared in a nursery of Summerland, has now grown up and comes to visit them daily in the family sèance-room, is an absurd belief, whether reincarnation be true or not. We must not *hurt their feelings* by insisting that every child who dies before the age of reason—when only it becomes a responsible creature—reincarnates immediately after its death—since, having had no personal merit or demerit in any of its actions, it can have no claim upon Devachanic reward and bliss. Also that as it is irresponsible till the age of, say, seven, the full weight of the Karmic effects generated during its short life falls directly upon those who reared and guided it. They will hear of no such philosophical truths, based on eternal justice and Karmic action. "You hurt our best, our most devotional feelings. Avaunt!" they cry, "we will not accept your teachings."

E pur se muove! Such arguments remind one of the curious objections to, and denial of, the sphericity of the earth used by some clever Church Fathers of old. "How can the earth, forsooth, be round?" argued the saintly wiseacres—the "venerable Bedes" and the Manichean Augustines. "Were it so the men *below* would have to walk with their heads downward, like flies on a ceiling. Worse than all, they could not see the Lord descending in his glory on the day of the second advent!" As these very logical arguments appeared irrefutable, in the early centuries of our era, to Christians, so the profoundly philosophical objections of our friends the *Summerland* theorists, appear as plausible in this century of Neo-Theosophy.

And what are your proofs that such series of lives ever take place, or that there is reincarnation at all?—we are asked. We reply (1): the testimony of every seer, sage and prophet, throughout an endless succession of human cycles; (2) a mass of *inferential* evidence appealing even to the profane. True, this kind of evidence—although not seldom men are hung on no better than such *inferential* testimony—

is not absolutely reliable. For, as Locke says: "To infer is nothing but by virtue of one proposition, laid down as true, to draw in another as true." Yet, all depends on the nature and strength of that first proposition. The Predestinarians may lay down as true their doctrine of Predestination;—that pleasant belief that every human being is preassigned by the will of our "Merciful Father in Heaven," to either everlasting Hell-fire, or the "Golden Harp," on the pinion-playing principle. The proposition from which this curious belief is inferred and laid down as true, is based, in the present case, on no better foundation than one of the nightmares of Calvin, who had many. But the fact, that his followers count millions of men, does not entitle either the theory of total depravity, or that of predestination, to be called a universal belief. They are still limited to a small portion of mankind, and were never heard of before the day of the French Reformer.

These are pessimistic doctrines born of despair, beliefs artificially engrafted on human nature, and which, therefore, cannot hold good. But who taught mankind about soul transmigration? Belief in successive rebirths of the human *Ego* throughout the cycles of life in various bodies is a universal belief, a certainty innate in mankind. Even now, when theological dogmas of human origin have stifled and well-nigh destroyed this natural inborn idea from the Christian mind, even now hundreds of the most eminent Western philosophers, authors, artists, poets and deep thinkers still firmly believe in reincarnation. In the words of Georges Sand, we are:—

> Cast into this life, as it were into an alembic, where, after a previous existence which we have forgotten, we are condemned to be remade, renewed, tempered by suffering, by strife, by passion, by doubt, by disease, by death. All these evils we endure for our good, for our purification, and so to speak, to make us perfect. From age to age, from race to race, we accomplish a tardy progress, tardy but certain, an advance of which, in spite of all the sceptics say, the proofs are manifest. If all the imperfections of our being and all the woes of our estate drive at discouraging and terrifying us, on the other hand, all the more noble faculties, which have been bestowed on us that we might seek after perfection, do make for our salvation, and deliver us from fear, misery, and even death. Yet, a divine instinct that always grows in light and in strength helps us to comprehend that nothing in the whole world wholly dies, and that we only vanish from the things that lie about us in our earthly life, to reappear among conditions more favourable to our eternal growth in good.

Writes Professor Francis Bowen, as quoted in *"Reincarnation, a Study of Forgotten Truths"**—uttering a great truth:—

> The doctrine of metempsychosis may almost claim to be a natural or innate belief in the human mind, if we may judge its wide diffusion among the nations of the Earth and its prevalence throughout the historical ages.

The millions of India, Egypt, China, that have passed away, and the millions of those who believe in reincarnation to-day—are almost countless. The Jews had the same doctrine; moreover, whether one prays to a *personal,* or worships in silence an impersonal deity or a Principle and a Law, it is far more reverential to believe in this doctrine than not. One belief makes us think of "God" or "Law" as a synonym of Justice, giving to poor little man more than one chance for righteous living and for the atoning of sins whether of omission or commission. Our disbelief credits the Unseen Power instead of equity with fiendish cruelty. It makes of *it* a kind of a sidereal Jack the Ripper or Nero doubled with a human monster. If a *heathen* doctrine honours the Deity and a Christian dishonours it, which should be accepted? And why should one who prefers the former be held as—an *infidel?*

But the world moves on now as it has always moved, and along with it move the ideas in the heads of the fogies. The question is not whether a fact in nature fits, or not, some special hobby, but whether it is really *a fact* based on, at least, inferential evidence. We are told by those special *hobbyists* that it is not. We reply, study the questions you would reject, and try to understand our philosophy, before you dismiss our teachings *à priori.* Spiritualists complain, and with very good reasons, of men of science who, like Huxley, denounce wholesale their phenomena whilst knowing next to nothing of them. Why do they do likewise, with regard to propositions based on the psychological experiences of thousands of generations of seers and adepts? Do they know anything of the laws of Karma—the great Law of Retribution, that mysterious, yet—in its effects—quite evident and palpable action in Nature, which, sooner or later, brings back every good or bad deed of ours to rebound on us, as the elastic ball, thrown against a wall, re-

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* We advise every disbeliever in reincarnation, in search of proofs, to read this excellent volume by Mr. E. D. Walker. It is the most complete collection of proofs and evidences from all the ages that was ever published.

bounds back on the one who throws it? They do not. They believe in a personal God, whom they endow with intelligence, and who rewards and punishes, in their ideas, every action of ours in life. They accept this *hybrid* deity (finite, because they endow it most unphilosophically with conditioned attributes, while insisting on calling it Infinite and Absolute), regardless of, and blind to, the thousand and one fallacies and contradictions in which the theological teachings concerning that deity involve us. But when offered a consistent, philosophical and quite logical substitute for such an imperfect God, a complete solution of most of the insoluble problems and mysteries in human life—they turn away in idiotic horror. They remain indifferent or opposed to it, only because its name is KARMA instead of Jehovah; and that it is a tenet which emanates from Aryan philosophy—the deepest and profoundest of all the world philosophies—instead of from the Semitic cunning and intellectual jugglery, which has transformed an astronomical symbol into the "one living God of Gods." "We do not want an *impersonal* Deity," they tell us; "a negative symbol such as 'Non-Being' is incomprehensible to Being." Just so. "The light shineth in darkness; but the darkness comprehendeth it not." Therefore they will talk very glibly of their *immortal* spirits; and on the same principle that they call a personal God *infinite* and make of him a gigantic *male,* so they will address a human phantom as "Spirit"—Colonel Cicero Treacle, or "Spirit" Mrs. Amanda Jellybag, with a vague idea that both are at least sempiternal.

It is useless, therefore, to try and convince such minds. If they are unable or unwilling to study even the broad general idea contained in the term *Karma,* how can they comprehend the fine distinctions involved in the doctrine of reincarnation, although, as shown by our venerable brother, P. Iyaloo Naidu of Hyderabad, Karma and Reincarnation are, "in reality the A B C of the Wisdom-Religion." It is very clearly expressed in the January *Theosophist,* "Karma is the sum total of our acts, both in the present life and in the preceding births." After stating that Karma is of three kinds, he continues:—

> *Sanchita Karma* includes human merits and demerits accumulated in the preceding births. That portion of the *Sanchita Karma* destined to influence human life . . . in the present incarnation is called *Prarabdham.* The third kind of Karma is the result of the merits or

demerits of our present acts. *Agami* extends over all your words, thoughts, and deeds. What you think, what you speak, what you do, as well as whatever results your thoughts, words, and acts produce on yourself, and on those affected by them, fall under the category of the present Karma, which will be sure to sway the balance of your life for good or for evil in your future development (or reincarnation).

Karma thus is simply *action,* a concatenation of *causes and effects.* That which adjusts each effect to its direct cause; that which guides invisibly and as unerringly these effects to choose, as the field of their operation, the *right person in the right place,* is what we call *Karmic law.* What is it? Shall we call it the hand of Providence? We cannot do so, especially in Christian lands, because the term has been connected with, and interpreted theologically as, the *foresight* and *personal design* of a personal god; and because in the active laws of Karma—*absolute Equity*—based on the Universal Harmony, there is neither foresight nor desire; and because again, it is our own actions, thoughts, and deeds which *guide that law,* instead of being guided by it. "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he reap." It is only a very unphilosophical and illogical theology which can speak in one breath of *free will,* and grace or damnation being *pre-ordained* to every human *from* (?) eternity, as though eternity could have a beginning *to start from!* But this question would lead us too far into metaphysical disquisitions. Suffice it to say that Karma leads us to rebirth, and that rebirth generates new Karma while working off the old, *Sanchita* Karma. Both are indissolubly bound up, one in the other. Let us get rid of *Karma,* if we would get rid of the miseries of rebirths or—Reincarnation.

To show how the belief in Reincarnation is gaining even among the un-intuitional Western writers, we quote the following extracts from an Anglo-Indian daily.

METEMPSYCHOSIS

"Dissatisfaction with the results of missionary enterprise in India is the most prominent feature of cultivated Christian sentiment in these days, and it must force attention both to the mistake of assailing Hinduism with the mock-culture of cram . . . and to the intellectual weakness of many of the benevolent persons entrusted with the operation. The mistake has already been painfully illustrated in the incidents

of the Madras Christian College disturbance, and it is not difficult to find an illustration of the attendant misfortune. In a missionary production of some pretensions an attempt is seriously made to confute the theory of the 'Transmigration of Souls,' which betrays an incapacity for metaphysical presentments and an ignorance of psychology that are unfortunate in any person undertaking such a task. Yet this effusion finds admission into a recognized missionary organ, and will perhaps be regarded by young missionaries as a triumphant display of intellectual strength to be coveted for the present and, if possible, imitated afterwards. And people wonder in the face of this sort of thing that the subtle Hindu mind laughs at Christian assaults on its stronghold! The arguments put forward in the paper referred to are worth looking into one by one.

"The first is that metempsychosis 'disregards the evidence of memory.' Proof of this presumption is, of course, not attempted. It so happens that psychologists from Plato downward have called attention to the familiar mental phenomenon in which persons placed, for the first time in their lives, in peculiar circumstances, are suddenly invaded by the conviction that they have gone through the same experience before. Most big schoolboys remember the explanation that this phenomenon may be attributable to the reduplicative property of consciousness resulting from the double lobing of the brain. But even such boys can hardly forget that the phenomenon has also been regarded as evidence of a pre-existent state; and reflecting men must see that one hypothesis is as moral, as reasonable, and as scientific as the other. It may, indeed, be said that the latter hypothesis finds better corroboration than the former in the moral analogies of our nature. There is nothing inconsistent with the highest philosophical teaching, or with the moral lessons or the actual experience of Christ; in the occlusions of memory Christ himself, even in adult manhood, under the stress of physical entanglements, sometimes entirely forgot his pre-existent state, and, what is more to the point, some of its radically inseparable convictions, such as that He had 'seen the Father,' and 'dwelt in the bosom of the Father,' and held communion with Him 'before the foundation of the world,' and had 'come down from heaven,' and should 'lose nothing.' On any other supposition some of Christ's most forcible sayings, and especially some of his most earnest prayers, would be unmeaning. If Christ, then, because of his temporary incarnation in human nature, sometimes became so oblivious of His antecedent conditions—of His

inseparable oneness with God, with its ineradicable accompaniments and its predestined results—as to be able earnestly to cry out 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me': things which *neither could be nor were truly desired by himself*—why may not any other human nature, not inlaid with an essential divinity, forget for longer or shorter periods its state of pre-existence, if it had one? Is it contended that such infirmity, unattainable by fallible man, was possible only to the infallible Son of God? Once admit the possibility of occlusion of memory, and the duration of the interval and even its character become matters of detail. Theologians may attribute to immaturity of intelligence that apparent unconsciousness of infants, which a keener insight may recognise as the inevitable hiatus between distinct conditions of a human consciousness. The babe being as perfectly human as any man—and indeed being, according to Christ, in the highest natural moral condition of humanity—the theory of a temporary occlusion of memory is not less philosophical, nor is it less moral, than the theory of undeveloped consciousness. No doubt the rank and file of religious teachers, perhaps because they have been so taught and fear to think for themselves, have decided on teaching differently. But this may only show that the rank and file of religious teachers are incapable of balancing philosophical equations and are not qualified for their great office. May it not also account for the melancholy fate of the religion taught by them in its conflict with Hinduism?

"It is gravely urged that 'spirit exists *only* as it acts or suffers in feeling, thinking, willing. Spirit in any other sense is a meaningless abstraction.' If this means that while spirit exists anywhere its experience must be registered somewhere, it is superfluous platitude. If it means either that temporary unconsciousness, in whole or in part, is an impossibility, or that every spirit must in every moment of its existence be fully conscious of all experiences registered in every other moment of its existence, it assumes what is contradicted in the daily experience of all human beings but idiots. Admit the possibility of a hiatus, and its width and depth are mere questions of degree.

"The second argument is that metempsychosis involves a 'libel on divine justice.' The alleged belief of the Hindus, that suffering in one state of being expiates sin in another, which is not essentially unjust, nor a whit less moral than the dogma of inherited or imported sin, may or may not be unfounded; but the first question is—is the atonement

of Christ incompatible with transmigration? If so, why? A single scripture text in support of this unwarranted assumption would be useful, for if transmigration is not inconsistent with the atonement of Christ, it is a waste of time trying to find out how or why it disagrees with any self-constituted religious teacher's ideas of divine justice. It is easy for omniscient sages to settle definitely what divine justice ought to be. . . . For any unprepossessed mind there is certainly much in the Christian scriptures which is compatible with, and nothing that contradicts, the doctrine of a pre-existent state. In what conceivable way can the theory of a man's being a fallen spirit or a risen animal, or both, conflict with what Christ actually said? When, for instance, a group, who evidently believed in a former state of existence, actually asked him (John IX, 2 and 3) whether a particular man was 'born blind' because of his own sin or that of his parents, he answered, *not* that they were harbouring a mischievous delusion—which was what he did in an unmistakable way when men in difficulty sincerely submitted real delusions to his scrutiny—but that they were mistaken in their opinion in the particular case. His teaching here may be fairly claimed, not merely as not being antagonistic to, but as being in harmony with, and even lending colour to, the transmigration of souls. If religious teachers choose to decide that Christ knew less about 'divine justice' than they, the issue must be left to awakening Christendom.

"The third argument is that metempsychosis 'is contrary to all sound psychology.' Nine out of ten of the religious teachers who glibly dogmatise in this fashion are such indifferent psychologists that they have no intelligent conception even of the scripture teaching—leave alone any more abstruse presentments—on the differing spheres of body, soul and spirit in the three-fold nature of man,* and would be sorely puzzled to explain in what way many of the higher human responsibilities are adjusted between their own psychic and pneumatic natures; and also what becomes of the unity of individual responsibility in the face of this tri-partite allotment. And yet such persons are put up to grapple with pantheistic Brahmans on the mysteries of Vedantism! The first step in comparative psychology is to show in a reasonable way that Christian psychology (as taught by its former and immediate disciples, and not as excogitated by low-pitched ecclesiastical afterthought) is

* The Christian scripture really teaches a *four-fold* nature in man—speaking of the natural body, the spiritual body, the soul, and the spirit. It is so far in close accordance with ancient Oriental ideas on the subject.

unfavorable to metempsychosis. This step has not been taken. The difficulty of taking it seems insuperable, and bland assumption of its ease can only be regarded as the audacity of ignorance.

"The fourth argument against transmigration is that it 'is opposed to sound ethics.' This is another of those almost comical assumptions cheerfully made by self-sufficient men, who begin by regarding themselves as the oracles of God and sole repositories of his mind, and naturally end by treating all they feel inclined to say as inspired; but for which, it is well to remember, there is no particle of authority in scripture, and no particle of proof anywhere else. All that any system of sound ethics can demand surely is that personal responsibility shall be attached to every intelligent exercise of individual will. How any conflict with this condition or any of its logical inferences can arise from the necessity for a future state of existence, it is obviously incumbent on those to point out who fling forth arbitrary assertions right and left. Every thinking man must be aware of a growth in his own moral consciousness by which a gulf has intervened between his present and his past: while his personality has survived to identify him, he is aware of distinct stages in his moral nature to which very different degrees of responsibility attach. How does this fact militate against sound ethics? Wherein, moreover, does the innocence of the ignorant child, who retains individual identity while sustaining differing burdens of responsibility, involve any danger to sound ethics? In what sense, in which such innocence does not also do so, can a pre-existent state, of all whose burdens of responsibility a human mind may not be uniformly or continuously conscious in that region of understanding in which impression and expression constantly re-act on each other, 'annihilate the distinction between virtue and vice, right and wrong'? Any mind not determined to retain foregone conclusions must perceive that the words quoted are solemn nonsense. It is hardly a whit more silly to maintain that any hypothesis of the evolution of the photosphere must 'annihilate time and space.' The difficulty of disproving either statement of course arises from the utter absence of any connexion between premise and conclusion.

"The fifth contention against metempsychosis is that 'it is not in accord with science.' Religious teachers are for the most part so imperfectly equipped in science that it is amusing to find any of them stepping out of the region of confused and confusing theology, in which

detection is not always sure, into the domain of science, where exposure is certain, to lay down the law as from the 'unanswerable pulpit.' Only a generation ago Darwin tickled the scientific world and convulsed the religious by inventing 'natural selection,' by which animals passed on their types, so to speak, to the next of kin. No assumption of recent years partakes more of the character of metaphysical delusion; nor perhaps does any other scientific fad conflict more with Bible doctrine that every animal and every tree is self-contained, having 'its seed in itself.' Every true physiologist ought to understand this profound truth and its striking confirmation in scientific analogies which cannot be explained here. Nevertheless nearly all the prophets—all but a thinking few—employed what wit the theory of Darwin left them in reconciling their religious sense (it cannot be called a religious conscience) to the unproved hypothesis, apparently for no better reason than that it was greatly affected by clever infidels. But what is there in science that negatives the idea, if it can be sustained by evidence of a natural selection by which if there be any soul at all, the individual soul of a lower organism may pass by stages into higher organisms? Science, of course, refuses to accept anything unproved, and from this point of view a religious man's begetting another in the spiritual hope, or the spirit of God causing a man to be born from above, are out of the range of physical science equally with the incarnation of Christ. But if such a thing as a physical life independently of a body, or a spiritual life independently of a soul, can exist at all, it is not more unscientific to imagine the soul of a monkey passing at some time after death into some higher type of animal, than it is to imagine either a spiritual birth on the one hand or a mutation of species on the other."—(Allahabad *Pioneer.*)

If "immortality" means "having unending existence in future time," then no self is immortal, for no self is in time. If, on the other hand, "immortality" means both "not ceasing to exist" and "*appearing* to exist throughout an endless future," then every self *is* immortal.

—G. Lowes Dickinson

AN APPLICATION OF DOCTRINE

[February Lookout cited the recently published results of a four-year study of the relationship between the color and intensity of rays in the sun's corona and weather, temperature, rainfall, and flight-time of nonstop transcontinental planes—as observed from Kansas City. Lookout concluded the item by appending "a few rather puzzling extracts (from H. P. Blavatsky) as a basis for individual speculation —somewhat in contradiction to the statistical findings."

Although "contradiction to scientific *interpretations* of statistical findings" would have more exactly expressed the idea in mind, the intent, of course, was to encourage individual reflection. One student subsequently offered the comments printed below.—Eds. THEOS.]

THERE are plenty of "Theosophical statements that would explain why scientists discover what they do," but what they explain or suggest to us naturally depends upon our intuitive perception of their deeper and more universal significances, and upon our ability to synthesize their basic ideas. The problem calls for a further "thinking through" of what has been already given out. The reconciliation, if such it may be called, certainly appears to be well substantiated by *essential Theosophical ideas.* By this means we may resolve the apparent discrepancies. Accordingly, all that anyone may do is to suggest a fresh consideration of the subject in the light of which intuitive perception may bring its own enlightenment.

Discussing the Zodiac and the cyclic progress of soul evolution, Mr. Judge has said (*Ocean,* p. 122): "During these progresses changes take place among men and on earth exactly signified by the constellations when those are read according to the right rules of symbology. It is not claimed that the conjunction causes the effect, but that ages ago the Masters of Wisdom worked out all the problems in respect to man and found in the heavens the means for knowing the exact dates when events are sure to recur, and then by imprinting in the minds of older nations the symbology of the Zodiac were able to preserve the record and the prophecy. Thus in the same way that a watchmaker can tell the hour by the arrival of the hands or the works of the watch at certain fixed points, the Sages can tell the hour for events by the Zodiacal clock."

If we are to apply the advice of Mr. Judge to make "universal applications of doctrine," we will not limit the above proposition to con-

junctions of planetary bodies. We may see the possibilities of significance in all heavenly phenomena. There are numerous hints throughout the teachings suggesting this to be so. The simple yet profound explanation of Mr. Judge quoted from *The Ocean of Theosophy* gives a key to genuine astrology. In view of this, it is highly significant, extremely gratifying, and an excellent substantiation of Theosophical teaching that scientists should be finding "celestial weather tip-offs," "corona readings," "warnings," "indicators," and "signals" from the Sun. Why not? Is not the Sun *"the heart of the Solar World (System)"* with its brain *"hidden behind the (visible) Sun"? "From thence, sensation is radiated into every nerve-centre of the great body, and the waves of the life-essence flow into each artery and vein. . . . The planets are its limbs and pulses."* (Commentary, *S.D.* I, 541.) Is it not the Sun which faithfully "reflects" the interior work, being "the heart of the Solar system"? And if it reflects the interior work, why not also the exterior, which is but a shadow of the interior? Is not that work a consummation and purification of the exterior? What is there more strange in this than that we should see the reflection of our exterior selves (little earths) in a mirror? But anyone can get confused who does not succeed in the endeavor to interpret inwardly the reversed image. Such was the case in *Alice in Wonderland,* or *Alice through the Looking Glass.*

We do not have to accept the erroneous theory that Solar phenomena specifically *cause* changes of weather on the earth to accept the statistical findings of science regarding celestial "indicators." Also, the weather "in the central part of the United States" is obviously not the same as the weather in other parts of the globe. How interpret this in view of those findings? Is it not conceivable that each and every place in the world, or even a place on some other planet in the solar system, may find its own "signs," correlations, and celestial "indicators"? Is it not so that each student of Theosophy can find in it what illumines his or her own problem? The Sun of Truth is for all.

What does cause the weather? With the Theosophical Adepts, "it is an established fact that it is the earth's magnetism that produces wind, storms, and rain." The concept that "man is a great dynamo, making, storing, and throwing out energy" (*Ocean,* p. 120) obviously has much to do with this. As Mr. Judge explained, those Adepts "hold that there is an indissoluble connection between man and every event

that takes place on this globe, not only the ordinary changes in politics and social life, but all the happenings in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. The changes in the seasons are for and through man; the great upheavals of continents, the movements of immense glaciers, the terrific eruptions of volcanoes, or the sudden overflowings of great rivers, are all for and through man, whether he be conscious of it or present or absent. And they tell of great changes in the inclination of the axis of the earth, past and to come, all due to man." (*Echoes from the Orient,* pp. 19-20.) Thus weather on earth is not *caused* by the Sun, but that does not debar *indications of it.*

How, then, can anything on earth be reflected by the Sun? And why not? *The Secret Doctrine* explains (I, 541), "there is a regular circulation of the vital fluid throughout our system, of which the Sun is the heart—the same as the circulation of the blood in the human body—during the manvantaric solar period, or life; the Sun contracting as rhythmically at every return of it, as the human heart does." Here is but one means of doing so.

If an analysis of a specimen of blood can tell much about the condition of the human body, why cannot "signs" in the circulation of the Solar system tell something about conditions in various parts of it?

The fact that a complete circulation of the vital fluid between earth and Sun requires some eleven years does not contradict the proposition we are considering. There are both faster and slower signs and changes than that. Those familiar with gaseous electronics, or the study of the conduction of electricity through gases and the search for the laws governing such phenomena, know that however short the time required for a plasma of ionized gas to travel or expand between the electrodes, there is a communication between them (traveling wave front, some call it) that is so much faster as to be almost instantaneous. Analogies exist also in the realm of Theosophical psychology. Thought knows no limits of space or time (in the ordinary sense) as sound does, and may travel more quickly than the lightning flash. Thus, in the case of the Sun, some "emanations" still are both much faster and slower. Light is evidently much faster. What of the spiritual light of the Sun!

When such observations are theosophically interpreted, why should they appear in the least contradictory to anything found or yet to be discovered? Evidently and happily we still "have men of science who *astrologize* upon the spots" of the Sun (*S.D.* I, 541 fn.), and now on

other Solar phenomena. Is not that a good thing? If "Professor Jevons attributes all the great periodical commercial crises to the influence of the Sun spots every eleventh cyclic year" (*loc. cit.*), may not others see more correlations without having to blame the Sun for our troubles? "This is worthy of praise and encouragement surely," said H.P.B., in the same footnote.

This ought to take us further than trying to assume falsity of the reports. Observational science is an ally of Theosophy. It is the impudent and blind negations of materialism that get nowhere, as well as the equally blind beliefs of theological dogmatism. The crux of the problem here is to disentangle observation from speculation, and apply Theosophical principles. It matters little what particular statements embody those principles.

Here is a helpful Theosophical idea: "As in the realm of matter, so in the realm of Spirit, the shadow of that which is cognized on the plane of objectivity exists on that of pure subjectivity" (*S.D.* I, 542). Apply this to the passages already cited and see if it does not help to illumine the correlation between "interior" and exterior work.

"Solar 'flames' seen through telescopes are *reflections,* says Occultism" (*S.D.* I, 530). Thus there should be nothing strange in the fact of seeing reflections even of earth phenomena in Solar phenomena, and vice versa, as well as reflections from within. Where are all the Solar "flames" when the Sun is viewed above *our* atmosphere? Some remarkable discoveries were made in this regard. (See the *Theosophical Movement,* February 1953, p. 94.)

The Sun is said to be (*a*) "the store-house of Vital Force which *is* the *Noumenon* of Electricity"; and also it is (*b*) "from its mysterious, never-to-be-fathomed depths, that issue those life currents which thrill through Space, as through the organisms of every living thing on Earth" (*S.D.* I, 531). Does not "every living thing on Earth" in turn affect those "life currents" which are returned to the Sun? Science is only beginning to find out the merest fraction of these greater facts in Nature. Some day it must learn far better and more.

One point may be added: Is it not in truly spiritual and higher Natures (including our own) that we may see reflected or illumined, as in the Sun, our own erring lower natures, like those of little earths, and thus better understand, control and use them to better purpose? The analogy holds, for the spirit of Brotherhood can help towards its truer practical realization.

CAUSALITY—AND THE IMMEDIATE AGENT

> All these warriors . . . have already been slain
> by me; be thou only the immediate agent.
>
> —KRISHNA TO ARJUNA

KRISHNA'S statement that all the warriors opposing Arjuna had *already* been slain suggests immediately the idea of "ripened" Karma. Krishna says, in effect, that the lines of causation delineated in astral matter by these men during many incarnations had become focussed in a completed dynamic structure which was visible to a seer as an accomplished fact. Its reproduction on the physical plane was, therefore, inevitable.

That the lines of causation *do* thus focus as a unit-structure in the astral light is attested to by the teachers of Theosophy and is also suggested by the prophecies of clairvoyants. Just as light vibrations are reflected from an object to the eye and transmitted through relay stations to the brain, there to be reassembled as a picture, so the inner eye of the clairvoyant transmits the rays from an astral structure, and the brain interprets it as an "event" seen in the Astral Light.

One such experience was reported by an early worker in the T.S. While sailing from India to England, he saw, clairvoyantly, one of his shipmates fall from the deck into the ocean—the ship circling about while a rescue was effected. A few months later, this incident occurred exactly as seen by the clairvoyant. "Time" had matured the astral structure into a *physical* event.

This is to say that consequences inhere in the act, effect is not separate from cause—save in man's consciousness. "Time matured," the causal structure loses its dynamism—*dies,* as it were, in the physical effect, disrupting its cohesive structure. At this point, the dispersed causal elements are collected into the "seed" of a new cause by man's thought, will, feeling, and imagination (or aspiration). This new seed-cause, with its potential structure impressed upon it, then starts on *its* cyclic journey toward maturity—to again impinge as "effect" on the consciousness that initiated it. In this way, the present is the child of the unfolded past, the parent of the unfolding future.

A cause (as we are limiting the term) is, then, an embodied thought. Its rate of vibration (*i.e.,* its color and tone) corresponds to the "prin-

ciple" engendering it; its intensity depends on the degree of will or desire injected into it. It emanates from the brain as vibration and merges into the sea of astral light; or, in another form of imagery, as a new form into a world of light-structures. There it affects, and is affected by, all other structures of the same "ray" or "key."

Yet, as we may recall, "a cause is not initiated in a vacuum; its inception is in human relationships." Though the dominant tone is that of its creator, it also carries overtones and undertones (various colorations) contributed by other actors in the situation. They, as co-creators, have an attraction for this cause and will collaborate in providing a focus for the effect. This is the position in which Arjuna found himself, but the role in which he was cast—that of the immediate agent—appalled him.

Each man is both receiver and transmitter of karma. Each man must, on occasion, act as the immediate agent. During childhood, adolescence, and youth, howsoever long in "years" these phases may last, a person plays this role unwittingly, carried away by the "attractions" of his nature. Thus, if his nature is lustful, greedy, or covetous, he offers himself as an agent for crimes of violence. If he is prideful, vain, self-ish-to-the-core, he is available to the forces of malice. If he has acquired only book-learning, he will not yet have gained that breadth of vision and penetration of heart that is a basic condition for wise action.

When, however, in the course of lifetimes, he has finally outgrown the credulousness of childhood, quelled the rebellion of adolescence, stilled the doubts of youth, and attained that calmness of mind and tranquility of spirit that is the hallmark of the mature human being, then, indeed, has he "come of age" spiritually. *Then,* he falls heir to his waiting inheritance, the birthright of every human soul—immortality in character, magnanimity in act, universality in motive. This man will have established the "condition" that will permit him to be used as an immediate agent for *good* only; and a cycle of inner harvest begins.

WORD PUZZLES

SINCE previous exploration of the meaning of *metempsychosis* in this series was, to say the least, incomplete, and since some readers of THEOSOPHY have called attention to the likelihood that the emphasis of this "Word Puzzles" was somewhat one-sided in favor of the terms' constant applicability, we now continue the discussion under the heading of *Reincarnation*—the R's appearing, in this case conveniently, after the M's.

An article by H. P. Blavatsky, "Thoughts on Karma and Reincarnation" (earlier reprinted in THEOSOPHY 30:532, and reproduced again in this issue), throws considerable further light on both words—especially in terms of the transition in usage which took place in Theosophical circles from 1875 to 1890. There H.P.B. speaks of the uninformed person who "talks reincarnation before he has even learnt the difference between *metempsychosis,* which is the transmigration of a human Soul into an animal form, and Reincarnation, or the rebirth of the same Ego in successive human bodies. Ignorant of the true meaning of the Greek word, he does not even suspect how absurd, in philosophy, is this purely exoteric doctrine of transmigrations into animals."

Elsewhere, in an article titled "Transmigration of Life Atoms," H.P.B. also treats of *metempsychosis* according to its then prevailing usage—identified with what she calls "the lowest exoteric form of transmigration":

> He who severs his personal Ego from the Atman . . . condemns by his own evil acts every atom of his lower principles to become attracted and drawn, in virtue of the magnetic affinity thus created by his passions, into the forming bodies of lower animals or brutes. This is the real meaning of the doctrine of Metempsychosis. It is not that such amalgamation of human particles with animal or even vegetable atoms can carry in it any idea of personal punishment *per se,* for of course it does not. But it is a cause created, the effects of which may manifest themselves throughout the next rebirths—unless the personality is annihilated. Otherwise, from cause to effect, every effect becoming in its turn a cause, they will run along the cycle of rebirths, the once-given impulse expending itself only at the threshold of Pralaya. (THEOSOPHY 33:208-9.)

That "metempsychosis," *as* transmigration, has been a philosophic as well as a "word" puzzle, is attested in the following paragraph—of

which the closing sentence indicates, whatever the terms chosen for the processes of *metempsychosis,* that one needs to engage in considerable careful thinking:

> Notwithstanding their esoteric meaning, even the words of the grandest and noblest of all the adepts, Gautama Buddha, are misunderstood, distorted and ridiculed in the same way. The *Hina-yana,* the lowest form of transmigration of the Buddhist, is as little comprehended as the *Maha-yana,* its highest form; and, because Sakya Muni is shown to have once remarked to his *Bhikkus,* while pointing out to them a broom, that "it had formerly been a novice who neglected to sweep out" the Council room, hence was reborn as a broom (!), therefore, the wisest of all of the world's sages stands accused of idiotic superstition. Why not try and find out, before accusing, the true meaning of the figurative statement? (*Loc. cit.*)

In another place (*S.D.* I, 185), H.P.B. uses *metempsychosis* in the sense of "transformation of species," and, in this context, states categorically that "the cycle of *metempsychosis* for the human monad is closed, for we are in the Fourth Round and the Fifth Root Race." This would seem to mean that *until* that time, lower monadic intelligence was still being "transformed" into *human* monads. This is a special use of *metempsychosis,* emphasizing that the door to the human realm of consciousness is closed beyond a certain point in earth evolution—to be opened again in a new cycle.

It is quite evident that in this case, as in others, H.P.B. accepts the regrettable fact that many dabblers in Eastern philosophy had rather permanently confused *metempsychosis* with distorted speculations about the possible retrogression of the human soul into animal forms, more properly called transmigration. When she speaks of the "true meaning of the Greek word" she is, however, talking about metempsychosis, not *reincarnation,* and it is this true meaning of the Greek word which the former "Word Puzzles" was endeavoring to explore. (*Reincarnation* derives from a Latin root.) As intended in *Isis Unveiled,* and also in the second section of "Thoughts on Karma and Reincarnation," *metempsychosis* includes not only what most Theosophists consider "reincarnation," but also all monadic and egoic growth in general—everything pertaining to the evolution of "gods, monads, and atoms." Because of extensive implications of "metempsychosis," and because subtle philosophical perception is needed to understand that human egos in this cycle do not suddenly leave their obligations of earth evolu-

tion and take up abode elsewhere as "gods," *reincarnation* became, perhaps, a more useful word for simple doctrinal dissemination. For *reincarnation* emphasizes return to *earth* in bodies similar to the ones we presently possess. Those who speculated, with inadequate preparation or background, upon *metempsychosis,* often, it appeared, became involved in weird imaginings—doted upon animals supposed to become human, or favorite "occult teachers" thought ready soon to graduate entirely from the world of flesh.

With the background of "Thoughts on Karma and Reincarnation" in mind—and noting that it was published in 1889, whereas *Isis Unveiled* had appeared in 1877—the puzzling sentence in H.P.B.'s definition in the *Glossary* clearly shows itself as open to additional interpretation to that suggested in THEOSOPHY's May note concluding the "Word Puzzles" discussion. Another and perhaps more accurate interpretation of the sentence, "metempsychosis should apply to animals alone," would be that metempsychosis (if considered as the radical alteration of the soul's habitat by reëmbodiment in an entirely different kind of form) *should* apply to animals alone. This possibility should have been discerned in the first place, for the very obvious reason that the *Glossary* discussion simply *adds* to the original discussions supplied in *Isis Unveiled.* Again, though, it is clear that disparagement of *metempsychosis* never involved "the true meaning of the Greek word," but only the term as "generally misunderstood by every class of European and American society, including many scientists." That H.P.B. did not, even in 1889, in any sense "write off" the philosophical value of *metempsychosis,* becomes especially apparent in her lengthy quotation from an Anglo-Indian daily newspaper (THEOSOPHY 30:539) where she approves the use of the word. Also, in the same article, she remarks that Professor Francis Bowen uttered "a great truth" when he remarked that:

> The doctrine of metempsychosis may almost claim to be a natural or innate belief in the human mind, if we may judge from its wide diffusion among the nations of the Earth and its prevalence throughout the historical ages. (THEOSOPHY 30:536.)

A reader of THEOSOPHY has called the Editors' attention to the fact that one of the words reprinted in the quotation from *Isis Unveiled* (used in May "Word Puzzles") was later listed by H.P.B. as among the many mistakes appearing in the original edition. In *Lucifer,* February, 1889, she wrote as follows:

> The word "planet" [page 351, volume 1, of *Isis*] was a mistake; that "cycle" was meant, *i.e.*, the "cycle of Devachanic rest." This mistake, due to one of the literary editors—the writer knowing English more than imperfectly twelve years ago, and the editors being still more ignorant of Buddhism and Hinduism—has led to great confusion and numberless accusations of contradictions between the statements in *Isis* and later theosophical teaching. The paragraph quoted meant to upset the theory of the French Reincarnationists who maintain that the same *personality* is reincarnated, often a few days after death, so that a grandfather can be reborn as his own grand-daughter. Hence the idea was combated, and it was said that neither Buddha nor any of the Hindu philosophers ever taught reincarnation *in the same cycle,* or *of the same personality,* but of the "triune man" . . . who, when properly united, was "capable of running the race" forward to perfection.

The sentence in *Isis Unveiled* read, in its original version, that "reincarnation, *i.e.,* the appearance of the same individual, or rather his astral monad, twice on the same planet is not a rule in nature; it is an exception." Actually, this sentence seems correct enough, providing one takes into account the intended meaning as well as the literal one —for the same "astral monad" and the "same individual" *do not* appear, according to the teachings of *The Secret Doctrine,* with exactly the same constitution, *ever*—during this planetary cycle. As her corrections in *Lucifer* show, H.P.B. wished to make clear that the man who dies cannot return again "intact"—with the same personality as well as the same egoic characteristics—nor can the ego of any ordinary human being escape the necessity of a *devachanic* interlude before *reincarnation.* After "the cycle of devachan or rest," however, the returning ego—in this case, higher *manas*—picks up the *skandhas* of a past personality on the astral plane and incorporates them into the structure of a new personality. Here reference to *samskara* in the *Glossary* is useful, for it implies that higher *manas* brings back "the germs of propensities and impulses from previous births to be developed in this, or the coming reincarnations," when occasion is favorable. In a sense, then, the *samskaras* and *some* of the *skandhas* may be thought of as reunited with each incarnation, the skandhas providing channels of opportunity for future development of lower "propensities and impulses from previous births."

All in all, it would appear H.P.B. was perfectly willing to use the word *metempsychosis* when discussing the general philosophy of cyclic

progression, but settled upon *reincarnation* as a doctrinal term to convey with minimum confusion some of the dimensions of Oriental thought on the subject of immortality. *Reincarnation* suffices to make clear the *central* idea of importance—that is, the portion of *metempsychosis* philosophy which applies directly to man. However, simplification here, as in all other instances, exacts a price; thus, scholars and philosophers who show genuine interest in the *idea* of reincarnation also show a decided preference for avoiding that particular term. *Metempsychosis, palingenesis,* and *rebirth* are much more likely to be chosen, simply because such philosophers wish those who read their arguments to consider the theory itself, apart from sectarian overtones. Perhaps the same cycle initiated by H.P.B.'s *Isis Unveiled—i.e.,* a treating of the subject of rebirth from the most universal standpoint, by way of exploration of *metempsychosis,* may be "reincarnating," itself. Then, if the understanding of rebirth doctrines proves more complete than in the nineteenth century, through an increasing intensity of study of Eastern philosophy and religion, the doctrine of *reincarnation* may be seen to be something more than a "special belief" of Theosophists.

As before remarked, general usage equates *reincarnation* with both *metempsychosis* and transmigration, as is indicated by the following definition supplied by the *Columbia Encyclopedia*:

> Reincarnation (Latin,—taking on flesh again), a term denoting the belief that the soul, either immediately upon the death of the body which it has occupied or after an interval spent in some region apart from the plane of the earth is reborn in another body, usually of the same species but sometimes in a lower or a higher scale of existence. In the latter case, the new form of life is determined by the record of the soul's behavior in its previous embodiment. This ethical point of view is found only among the races of higher development; but the belief in reincarnation has had a place in the speculations of primitive minds of all times, in the attempt to discover something of the soul's destiny. In various forms it appears among African tribes, among peoples of the Orient, and in almost all parts of the world. The words transmigration and metempsychosis sometimes have the same meaning as reincarnation, but they are also employed in a somewhat different sense.

In other words, *reincarnation* is less likely to connote a variety of meanings than *metempsychosis,* and is thus "safer" for ordinary discussion. But this does not imply that the proper use of the Greek word must forever be dispensed with. The further into study of H.P.B.'s

writings one goes, in fact, the more necessary it becomes to have another word to add to reincarnation, one conveying broader meaning. Referring again to H.P.B.'s phrasing of the Third Proposition in the *S.D.*, we may reflect upon the meaning of the statement that "the pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no special gifts or privileges in man, save those won by his own Ego, through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations." It is sometimes thought that *metempsychosis* here refers to the transformations occurring before the "man-stage" is reached, but, if this is so, why the words "*personal* effort and merit"? Again, *metempsychosis* is truly a universal process applying to egoic evolution as well as to the transformations occurring in the lower orders of nature. As an indication that the word has a special significance *after* a certain degree of egoity has been reached, as well as *before,* one need only turn to H.P.B.'s description of "the four modes of birth" in her *Glossary* under the heading *Chaturyoni*: the fourth of these "modes" she designates as "by sudden self-transformation, as Bodhisattvas and Gods." This, we should think, is the highest and most important aspect of metempsychosis.

If one were seeking for a single "all-purpose" term around which to weave the whole intricate fabric of the Third Proposition of the *S.D.*, no better word could be found than *metempsychosis,* for it applies in differing ways to the lower orders of nature, to transformations of consciousness between species, and, in the special and restricted sense of *reincarnation,* to present man.

Such a suggestion, however, is not intended to suggest a rephrasing of Theosophical literature, but only to indicate that the broader term *metempsychosis* represents a universal verity, and *reincarnation* the specific manner in which the universal principle applies to ourselves in this cycle.

In any case, it will also be of considerable importance to know that any term used to designate rebirth needs to be pondered when used, and not taken as sufficient explanation of itself. Many of those who have followed the discussions in this series will no doubt have discovered, along with the writers, that every "confusion" of word usage is, in this case, an opportunity for gaining further insight into the actual process of egoic growth through cyclic transformation.

YOUTH COMPANIONS ASK—AND ANSWER

IN mathematics we can rely on there being exact and unwavering rules and principles—and that is that. In the study of man, we find such a complicated mixture of "goods" and "bads" and compromises that it seems that the only way one may judge his own character or another's is by taking the over-all picture of motives and acts and choices, and seeing which side they fall on. Why can't there be any ***absolutes for morality, as there are for mathematics?***

(*a*) But we could say that in morality, at least from a theosophical viewpoint, there are exact and unwavering principles just as there are in mathematics. Karma is referred to as the action or means by which principles restore motives and action to balance. So man can be regarded as standing in essentially the same relation to both a problem in mathematics and in "morality." In both cases it is his task to work out the problem in terms of the principles involved. This may sound like a gross oversimplification of man's role as a moral being, but, according to the *Voice,* in time the aspirant is prepared to cross the second portal of "Shila, the key of Harmony in word and act, the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for Karmic action." Though this point seems for most of us reachable only in the very distant future, the statement is helpful in understanding the idea of "karmaless" beings—*i.e.,* those with the ability to single out and apply moral principles.

A general definition of truly moral action might be stated as the harmonious working of self-conscious beings with the evolutionary laws of nature. Spinoza, the great pantheistic philosopher of the seventeenth century, lived and thought along similar lines. It was his belief that, by freeing himself from bondage to passion and by developing his rational and intuitive capacities, man could eventually see all things in God (Nature), and identify his thoughts and interests with cosmic thought and interest.

(*b*) People who adopt the agnostic viewpoint as their own, will give credence to only those things which can be proved. Of course, the orientation of an agnostic is the product of that grand debate between science and Christian theology which raged hotly during the last century. The focal point then was, for the exponents of science, the nega-

tion of the possibility of knowledge about God, on the grounds that He was outside the realm of human experience. Now that the debate has cooled, the ramifications of agnosticism in the private lives of people are still legion. You find men choosing "science" as a career because its purposes and methods can be wholeheartedly participated in by them. For it deals with things which are definitely within the realm of human experience—things which can be *handled,* tested thoroughly, or measured accurately. This sort of regard is a dominant theme in our culture today.

Even "general science" is not stringent enough for one highschool professor we know. He will allow little good to be said about any sciences less exact than mathematics. He says that much of other sciences is "gobbledy-gook" and states that he, himself, has given up teaching physics because even physics is subject to change now and then. Its rules are not "completely unwavering" as are those of mathematics. He teaches nothing but math now, and need no longer deal with any disquieting unknowns.

Now since one intellectually sharp man will go this far in order to insure his continuous contact with the known—the provable—it surely is logical for others to at least wonder if maybe there shouldn't be some "unwavering" rules for guidance in a field of experience at once more demanding and personal—that of moral existence. To evaluate the moral *color* of an act is a difficult pursuit, however. Theosophy first maintains that this color is determined by the motive behind the act, and suggests that one look into the hazy realm of motivation. This realm is held to be a real world of experience for the individual and a real factor in the world at large.

But Theosophy does hold forth a standard of evaluation in this realm. It holds that the "good" motive is in evidence when a man chooses his actions in terms of what is good for all beings. In common terms, he is pursuing an unselfish motive. Conversely, a "bad" motive is said to be involved when he chooses selfishly, without concern for the effect his action will have on others. Yet in the realm of motive, accurate measuring and thorough testing are not possible. And for good reason.

To begin with, there is a limited fund of knowledge existent in one's mind at the time of any one choice; as this fund of knowledge grows, choices of action regarding the same matter may be different. When

a little child breaks a treasured object, he may perturb his mother, but he is excused from censure because "he doesn't know any better." His knowledge of right and wrong and of the effects of his action on others is uncultivated. A similar yardstick can be used to measure the morality of older people. Their knowledge of the world and its relationships grows and alters with time. As each one discovers more about how things affect other people—how they can best be helped or how they are actually hindered—he will be able to make more intelligent choices for the aforementioned "good of all." The complication to our thought here is that he may have been just as sincere in his motive when his choice of action was not actually so helpful. The moral judgment of an action, it would seem, requires two analyses. First, is the motive itself selfish or unselfish in intent? Second, does the act, itself, in reality carry out a helpful or unhelpful function?

We come upon a third problem: are one's motives genuine, or is one fooling himself? The field of psychoanalysis has pointed up this problem in our lives, and it is an important one. On it hinges true morality. In illustration, we quote Erich Fromm in his *Psychoanalysis and Religion*:

> Psychoanalysis has given the concept of truth a new dimension. In pre-analytic thinking a person could be considered to speak the truth if he believed in what he was saying. Psychoanalysis has shown that subjective conviction is by no means a sufficient criterion of sincerity. A person can believe that he acts out of a sense of justice and yet be motivated by cruelty. He can believe that he is motivated by love and yet be driven by a craving for masochistic dependence. A person can believe that duty is his guide though his main motivation is vanity. In fact most rationalizations are held to be true by the person who uses them.

We imagine, along with Dr. Fromm, that unconscious deceit concerning one's motivations is as commonplace as air—and as hard to grasp. We find confirmation of this thought in an old religious document of Buddhist origin called "Tibetan Precepts." One of the ten "resemblances" which may cause one to err says: "Actions performed in the interest of self may be regarded as being altruistic." And, even though the revealing of our unconscious deceits is extremely difficult, few things are more important. For as we come to understand our real motives, we will be able to better act as responsible moral agents.

"O SINLESS ONE"

THE "sinless state," high on the steep path to perfection, is the climacteric—the critical period on the long ascent. As the aspirant nears this point of no return he finds he is almost alone, and although the sinless state is visualized by many, its attainment occupies the thought and efforts of the few. This condition, it is said, will continue as long as self-indulgence is favored above self-discipline.

We have many disciples: there are those of orthodox religion, of the sciences, of the arts, and a number of others that are part of civilization. But it is only the eye of spirit which perceives the essential effects of a far-reaching self-discipline, one that will carry on from life to life to higher and higher levels. Unlike those who climb a great mountain, the aspirant to spiritual heights cannot return to lower levels for shelter and rest. He must remain in the rarefied spiritual atmosphere or lose that which he has acquired through painful effort.

The sinless state is one of high achievement, but it may become a plateau upon which the soul is content to remain. Then the ego is blinded by the glamor of the *satwa* quality, the sunshine that warms the soul, he sees no more the heights beyond. This loss of vision may result in a life adjusted to the letter of the law, but lacking in spiritual knowledge. But, in any case, before the sinless state can be attained there are four great adjustments that all will eventually have to make. These may be made consciously or they may come to the individual gradually through the pressure of Karma; most fortunate are those who are free from doubt, and in whom the will to achieve remains strong, for they readily find the appropriate step in each hazardous situation.

All who seek the life of spirit must find the right adjustment to birth; right adjustment to life—to death—and finally right adjustment to life after death. The higher self, never having lost the consciousness of its own plane of action, is unaffected by birth, death, life, and devachan. It is like the good husbandman who experiences all four seasons; he reaps the harvest whether bountiful or meager, but remains undisturbed while making ready for the next sowing. This good husbandry, of course, may be thwarted by the man seeking harvests for his personal gain. In this case the joy of sowing and reaping turns to

bitterness and despair, and the lethal mists of *tamas* hide the sun. Under such a shadow the harmony within the sevenfold being ceases and he becomes maladjusted to the law of the spiritual plane.

Unlike the complexity of man-made law, spiritual law is simple. It is this simplicity which is deceptive to the lower man. He is accustomed to the intricacies of a system of law which is changing and subject to contradictory interpretation. Therefore the demarcation between virtue and sin, good and evil, is eclipsed by expediency. Driven on by the *rajasic* impulse, all his activities are characterized by complexity. His adjustments are made through indirect and complicated means, with the result that they are partial and limited in effect. He looks upon life as a period of years and not as a continuous state, and forms no concept of the higher planes or states of consciousness.

* * *

Rightly understood, symbolism can be used to clarify occult teachings. Symbols are the tools of the mind. With them the mind builds its thought structures. The alphabet, considered as a group of symbols, is such a tool. But alphabets become obsolete in time, and new ones evolve. Not so with the symbols of occultism; they are ageless, and by their use the reincarnating ego may regain knowledge he formerly possessed. Ideas associated with symbols gain structure and duration, and become part of soul-memory. The circle, the square, and the triangle are three simple but important ideative representations, associated from time immemorial with esoteric philosophy.

Of the three, the circle is best adapted to a discussion of eternal law. By understanding the symbolism of the circle, the finite mind may reach a true conception of the continuity of life in spirit. The line of the circle is continuous and endless—it never changes direction, but returns upon itself without deviation. Retaining a constant relation to the center, the circle affords a basic symbol for the cyclic manifestation of the macrocosm, and in like manner it is a fitting symbol of the rhythmic descent of the "Heavenly Man" in matter. Birth is a point of the circumference at which the sevenfold existence is renewed. By again assuming the four lower principles, the upper triad does not change, but, like the bee in the springtime, flies forth in search of nectar through sun and shadow. At another point the search is ended. The Self rests again upon the simple law of its being, and a period of assimilation begins.

Continuity, the circumference of the circle, is the key to the under-

standing of the action of spirit. One may therefore consider true adjustment as the function of spirit rather than matter. It must be borne in mind that at birth, the egoic man, the man of spirit, has a vision of the life about to be entered, and at death a summation of that life. He sees all in relation to his previous life-cycles and those to come. Wise is he who listens to the inner voice. It is called in the mystic works the "Soundless Sound," the "Voice of the Silence," or the "Still Small Voice"; but by whatever name, the Voice always speaks to him who listens. Only the ear of matter is completely deaf to it.

The phrase "O Sinless One" is used more than once in *The Bhagavad-Gita.* In spite of this substantial achievement attributed to his disciple by Krishna, it is not until the end of the matchless dialogues that Arjuna, having overcome his despondency, is ready to "fight on." His many questions are answered; knowledge dealing with birth, life, death, and after-death states carefully elaborated; spiritual knowledge and its objectives are defined, and at his request Arjuna is given a vision of "the Divine Being." We may understand from this that the sinless state does not indicate the acquirement of spiritual knowledge, but is preparatory to its reception. But once having overcome the letter-of-the-law attitude, and having learned the nature of devotion, Arjuna is ready to receive the deeper mysteries of spirit.

Those who have heard the *Gita* in its original Sanscrit know that it has the rhythm and beauty of music. And part of that rhythm and beauty is Krishna's method of addressing Arjuna, reminding one of repeated musical themes—"O best of the descendants of Bharata"; "O son of Kunti"; "Son of Pritha." Incident to profound discourses upon philosophy, Arjuna is reminded by these salutations of his birthright. But most significant of all these short salutations referring to birth is the one which is a key to the correct understanding of all births—"Grieve not, O son of Pandu, for thou art born with the divine destiny." That so few attain such a destiny is the result of Karma. The present life, however, affords the time when such a fortunate future birth may be fashioned by sinlessness and devotion. Each birth is the union of spirit and matter for a period of years under Karma; each birth, therefore, has in this union the seed of a divine destiny, a seed that germinates only in the chaste soil of sinlessness. With these thoughts in mind, one can readily realize that the material and physical circumstances surrounding birth are transitory and of secondary importance. The in-

herent nature of that which is born rises above all circumstances.

Deep within us, it is a power which propels towards action. As physical beings we may use it to regress or progress; we may increase its force or diminish it, but when the sinless state is entered upon the spiritual man can use his power to weld together the two selves—the higher and lower. And while Krishna expounds the philosophy of the ages he tells Arjuna of his power:"O thou of mighty arms"; of his prowess: "O harasser of thy foes"; and of his unworldliness: "O despiser of wealth" and of his true rank: "O best of embodied men." Thus, as the great philosophy unfolds and the battle commences, Arjuna is reminded that he already possesses the attributes needed to face the foe with confidence. This is true of each individual who has the courage to place his chariot where the nature of the enemy can be seen. It is then that the inherent inner strength asserts itself. There is no advantage in obtaining wisdom unless there is the accompanying urge to put its tenets to action; otherwise the teaching falls upon deaf ears. At best, it is stored in the memory, to remain an unused ornament of the mind.

That Arjuna progresses far beyond his despondency is indicated in the discourse by the salutation, "Unto thee who findeth no fault." This short phrase contains the secret of right adjustment to life. Like many an occult truth, it is clothed in the simplest language. Fault-finding functions in the manner of an iron curtain, placing an impassable barrier where free intercourse is most needed. Through the irritability which it fosters the flow of spiritual knowledge is inhibited. Normally, this influx should fall upon the brain as the matchless snow crystals, symbols of the astral light, fall upon the clothing in winter. But on the mental plane a fault-finder neither sees the symbols nor that which they symbolize. And as the brain forms the outer clothing of the psychic nature, it is there that any influx from the higher planes must be seen and felt by the thinker. For a better understanding it must be remembered that the brain also receives the vibratory impressions from the senses. These conjure up before the consciousness the countless associated impressions stored in memory. In the process the awakened soul is baffled in its need to hold to the meditation it seeks. Dissatisfaction results from this vibratory condition and fault-finding follows; like nature's storms, the precipitation is downward. But in the tenth discourse Krishna is addressing a self-conquered disciple when he says, "Unto thee who art well pleased." Again we have a simple phrase with

wide significance. It describes a well-adjusted nature, receptive to the inner voice.

There is no lack of instruction upon the subject of death in the *Gita,* but it is well to bear in mind that Arjuna, though subject to despondency, has passed beyond the need for personal comfort. His ears are attuned to a spiritual philosophy. His chariot is placed between the two armies; the arrows are flying, and death is imminent. The teaching, therefore, is one of equanimity; of freedom from desire, from anxiety, fear and anger, and Arjuna knows now that he must not grieve for either the living or the dead. Jesus took a similar view when he said to his disciples: "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." Theosophic teachings have shown that the life's meditation, upon which the mind and heart are set, has a profound effect upon the inner conditions after the body ceases to breathe—and this effect also influences the period between incarnations.

The wise man builds for the future; while seeking harmonious proportions for his dwelling, his main concern is with the choice of materials able to withstand the inroads of weather and time. And, like the wise builder, each ego can control his stream of thought—his life's meditation so that its essence will withstand all change. While still in a body, his conscious life, lived in thought, will become the life of spirit. It is then that death will come as a friend no matter what the bodily condition may be; the devachanic period will strengthen the finer attributes in preparation for a return to earth-life, and a resumption of a path leading to greater heights of spiritual knowledge.

Hail to thee—"O sinless one"!

A Key to Buddhism

Buddhism, I feel sure, is a religion of important affirmation. Doubtless many Buddhists, themselves, do not know quite what they mean by illusion, but I think the Buddhist sages have known. I think that to these sages Maya has not meant the illusion of perception but the false conclusions which we base upon perception—the superstitions of permanency we develop about impermanent things, the illusion of immutability that we have about changing things, the illusion of possession we develop about things we use.

—Edmond Taylor

ON THE LOOKOUT

New H.P.B. Pamphlet

Theosophy for July added to its list of publications, appearing on the back cover, an H.P.B. pamphlet (a collation) entitled *What is Theosophy?—Its Nonsectarian Spirit.* Since the statements collected therein have never before been assembled to highlight the central points made, students and Theosophy School teachers may wish to avail themselves of an opportunity to ponder at length, during the summer, Madame Blavatsky's enunciation of educational principles in regard to theosophic dissemination.

This pamphlet is clearly meant to supplement doctrinal study by inviting reflection upon the *attitude* which has always been embodied by representatives of the "Wisdom Religion." An explanatory note prefacing *What is Theosophy?—Its Nonsectarian Spirit* observes:

> The philosophical and educational perspectives of Theosophical teachers are, clearly, as much a part of Theosophy as the specific tenets with which students have more readily become familiar. Implicit in Madame Blavatsky's words, moreover, is the conclusion that a man of truly philosophic mind will eventually discover the eternal verities, and those teachers who, throughout the ages, have expressed them. But to learn the contents of doctrine without apprehending the broad-minded spirit which must have always inspired their discovery is but to know a body without heart. . . .

Philosophic Function of the Theosophical Society

> H. P. Blavatsky was the chief instrument in the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875, her major literary works its inspiration. The Society was intended to embody a genuine nonsectarian spirit, the point of view from which *Isis Unveiled,* H.P.B.'s first work, was written. Independent thinkers could respect the T.S. because its platform declared respect for independent thought. Later, however, as Madame Blavatsky presented a large body of specific teachings for consideration, many members of the T.S., like religious followers of all times past, became more concerned with doctrine than with thought—not the pioneers they might have been, but simply men proud of privileged doctrinal possessions. So, for many, and certainly in the eyes of the world, Theosophy became a religion—more enlightened than others, perhaps, yet sectarian.
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> Passages from Madame Blavatsky's inspiring article "What is Truth?" figure prominently in the present collation; when she printed

this article in her magazine *Lucifer* in 1888, she had watched the Theosophic scene for thirteen years and evidently felt it necessary to make even more vehement her outspoken protest against the sectarian spirit. Thus she did what she could to keep these teachings from becoming mere articles of "faith," or, finally, dogmas.

Doctrine and Philosophy

The passages collected for *What is Theosophy?* originally appeared in more than a dozen places, and their assemblage is particularly illuminating in regard to the relationship between tenet and doctrine and the attitude of philosophical quest which, H.P.B. reminds her students, is an essential part of the meaning of Theosophy itself. For instance, she here explains why those who employ the term Theo-sophia should be sure that their presentation to the world of the writings of the Wisdom Religion is on the basis of a truly catholic platform:

> Practical Theosophy may be justly regarded as the universal "coach," a tutor of world-wide knowledge and experience. Viewed as a philosophy, Theosophy in its practical work is the alembic of the Mediaeval alchemist. It transmutes the apparently base metal of every ritualistic and dogmatic creed (Christianity included) into the gold of fact and truth. This is why, when applying for Admission into the Theosophical Society, no one is asked what religion he belongs to, nor what his deistic views may be. These views are his own personal property and have nought to do with the Society. Because Theosophy can be practiced by Christian or Heathen, Jew or Gentile, by Agnostic or Materialist, or even an Atheist, provided that none of these is a bigoted fanatic, who refuses to recognize as his brother any man or woman outside his own special creed or belief.

Caution for Enthusiastic Promulgators

What is Theosophy? concludes with a passage from H.P.B. addressed particularly to the manner in which her own teachings should be "offered to the consideration of the thinking portion of the public":

> Concerning the deeper spiritual, and one may almost say religious, beliefs, no true Theosophist ought to degrade these by subjecting them to public discussion, but ought rather to treasure and hide them deep within the sanctuary of his innermost soul. Such beliefs and doctrines should never he rashly given out, as they risk unavoidable profanation by the rough handling of the indifferent and the critical. Nor ought they to be embodied in any publication except as hypotheses offered to the consideration of the thinking portion of the public.

Theosophical truths, when they transcend a certain limit of speculation, had better remain concealed from public view, for the "evidence of things not seen" is no evidence save to him who sees, hears, and senses it. It is not to be dragged outside the "Holy of Holies," the temple of the impersonal divine *Ego,* or the indwelling SELF. For, while every fact outside *its* perception can, as we have shown, be, at best, only a relative truth, a ray from the absolute truth can reflect itself only in the pure mirror of its own flame—our highest SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

"TRUTH ALONE IS ETERNAL"

With these words, Madame Blavatsky introduces a succinct explanation of why the spirit of inquiry must always accompany study of definitive teachings, if the true attitude of Theosophy is to be maintained:

One man's thought, infinitely various as are its manifestations, is not all-embracing. Denied ubiquity, it must necessarily speculate but in one direction; and once transcending the boundaries of exact human knowledge, it has to err and wander, for the ramifications of the one central and absolute Truth are infinite. Hence, we occasionally find even the greater philosophers losing themselves in the labyrinths of speculations, thereby provoking the criticism of posterity. But as all [in the Theosophical Society] work for one and the same object, namely, the disenthralment of human thought, the elimination of superstitions, and the discovery of truth, all are equally welcome. The attainment of these objects, all agree, can best be secured by convincing the reason and warming the enthusiasm of the generation of fresh young minds, that are just ripening into maturity, and making ready to take the place of their prejudiced and conservative fathers. And, as each—the great ones as well as small—have trodden the royal road to knowledge, we listen to all, and take both small and great into our fellowship. For no honest searcher comes back empty-handed, and even he who has enjoyed the least share of popular favor can lay at least his mite upon the one altar of Truth.

THE TREND IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY

An item in the New York *Times* for May 15 provides further evidence that the interest of the twentieth century in psychic phenomena has a less emotional and more rational focus than that of the nineteenth:

What we used to call "psychic research" and what is now called "parapsychology" is so respectable that it engages the attention of outstanding psychologists here and abroad. If we need any proof

> of this we have it in the "Conference on Spontaneous Phenomena" which is to take place from July 11 to 17 under the auspices of the Society of Psychical Research (London) at so dignified an academic institution as Newnham College, Cambridge University, England.

Particularly interesting is the increasing number of eminently respectable psychologists who attend such conferences. The *Times* notes that "the presiding officer at the conference will be Dr. W. H. Salter, with Dr. Gardner Murphy, a well-known American psychologist consultant."

Spontaneous Phenomena Emphasized

The *Times* item concludes with the definition:

> By spontaneous phenomena are meant spontaneous telepathy, apparitions, hauntings and poltergeists, with the major emphasis on spontaneous telepathy. Laboratory investigations will not receive much attention because they do not deal with spontaneous phenomena. The psychologists who will be in attendance will demand trustworthy accounts of telepathic and similar happenings that occur in everyday life.

Against Compulsory Medicine

We note, for the benefit of those who may be interested, the existence of The Citizens Medical Reference Bureau, Inc., 1860 Broadway, Suite 1215, New York 23, N.Y. The bureau, wholly supported by voluntary contribution and advocating "no form of treatment but in defense of parental control over children," presently opposes municipal fluoridation of water. Information is also available regarding constitutional rights in claiming exemption from vaccination for small-pox and similarly required immunization practices.

More Notes on the Gita

Philosophy East and West for October has another article worthy of attention—"The Gita: East and West," by Paul Weiss. Dr. Weiss is professor of philosophy at Yale University and founder and editor of *Review of Metaphysics* and this contribution further reveals the increasing appreciation of Eastern philosophy by Western scholars.

As Carl Van Doren once pointed out during a CBS "Invitation to Learning" program featuring the *Gita,* this scripture is best approached in the realization that it deliberately sets forth *central paradoxes* in

order to stimulate reflection. Dr. Weiss opens his article with a similar observation:

> Every reading of the *Bhagavad-gita* makes it more and more evident that this is a great work, with a message for all mankind. It should be a meeting place for East and West. But this has rarely proved to be the case. While Westerners have again and again criticized the *Gita* for failing to meet most obvious ethical questions, questions which it itself raises, Easterners have offered ever new and subtle re-interpretations. As a consequence, issues between them have not been well drawn. The answers in the *Gita* are evidently more subtle than most Westerners have been inclined to admit; but these answers do seem to leave problems which most Easterners do not appear to have faced.

MANY BATTLEGROUNDS

> Arjuna, the soldier, says that, no matter what the reward, he would rather die than kill his kinsmen, and this even though they are in the wrong and ready to kill him. His readiness to turn the other cheek is most commendable, and seems to conform to the preachings of the Buddha and the Christ, and perhaps even of Gandhi. Lord Krishna (Krsna) replies to Arjuna from at least six different perspectives—the moral, the naturalistic, the valuational, the metaphysical, the theological, and the religious. Each answer leaves grave difficulties. If these cannot be resolved in terms of the *Gita,* the *Gita* cannot offer more than a fragment of a final account; if they can be resolved in terms of the *Gita,* there is need for a wise and friendly guide to teach men just where and how the answers can be found.

Dr. Weiss quotes Gandhi as one of the "Easterners who have offered ever new and subtle re-interpretations." Mr. Gandhi found the *Gita* an inspiration for the gospel of non-violence. Yet Gandhi was not a dogmatist on this score. He simply set a practical example—the letting of whatever is eternally true in *Gita* scripture speak to each man's highest ideals. Gandhi once wrote: "Its [the *Gita's*] whole design is inconsistent with the rules of conduct governing the relation between warring parties. . . . Take any instance of untruth or violence, and it will be found that at its back was the desire to attain the cherished end. . . . Let it be granted, that according to the letter of the *Gita* it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with renunciation of fruit. But after 40 years' unremitting endeavour fully to enforce the teaching of the *Gita* in my own life, I have, in all humility, felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of *ahimsa* in every shape and form."

Duty and Discrimination

Dr. Weiss notes the more obvious interpretations of Krishna's teachings which have appealed to Westerners. But always, he shows, full understanding of the *Gita* requires penetration of the obvious. Even in respect to the bearing of arms in war at the command of one's nation, a paradox is presented. Dr. Weiss puts it this way:

> If we are professional soldiers, we have given up the privilege of judging the right and wrong of the war in which we are involved. Our task is to do what we have pledged ourselves to do. But since we are also men, we ought to look at the soldierly work we do in more inclusive, cosmic, eternal terms. Other men will have different tasks.
>
> He, on the other hand, who is devoted to helping mankind, to charity and sacrifice, must adopt the work of others and their guilt as his own, see his own acts as inseparable from, infected by, theirs, for otherwise he will not be fully charitable. On this view, all tasks are limited, specific, involving wrong. But all of them can be encompassed within a higher-order duty to do good to others.

A Philosopher's Judicial Summation

Dr. Weiss concludes his brief but provocative discussion:

> The *Gita* sounds as though it offered a theory of ethics for a caste man, pledged to do a necessary bit of social work. If such a man were to do his best, offering in humility and trust what he does to God for God's own judgment, it seems to say, he will do all he should. But if this is all the *Gita* says it is a book for the East, and then for a time happily fading rapidly into the past. It will have no message for those who recognize that man has more than limited duties, that there is good action and bad, that killing, even in a good cause, needs justification, and that an acceptance of inevitability and divine responsibility still leaves the question of the nature and conquest of evil, and the avoidance of evil deeds by men.
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> It is difficult, I think, to read the *Gita* with an unprejudiced eye without feeling that it has serious limitations as a work in ethics, nature, value, metaphysics, theology, or religion. But the spirit of the work transcends these limitations. It tells us that we all have onerous work to do in this world, work that entails injury and wrong doing. It is foolish to suppose that anything we do is altogether satisfactory, foolish to try to accept it, with its consequences, as all-sufficient. And, no matter how we twist and turn, we cannot avoid doing some work. Work ought to be, must be, done, but it should be viewed in its context, evaluated in terms of intent as well as accomplishment, treated as a unit-value having a place within a single universe of value.

A Theosophical Appraisal

C. J. Ducasse's latest major work, *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion* (1953), suggests that this noted philosopher's continued interest in the philosophy of karma and reincarnation may considerably assist the progress of the Theosophical Movement in the scholarly world. Statements in his Preface are reminiscent of the attitude and intent expressed in the two prefaces to H. P. Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled.* He writes:

> Seldom is religion, either in general, or in one or another of its particular forms, discussed without initial bias favorable or adverse. Toward a subject charged with so high an emotional voltage as that of religion, complete philosophical objectivity is perhaps impossible; but in the pages of this book it has at least been constantly striven for. As could be expected in hewing to the line of it, and as the preceding remarks will have made evident, the chips have fallen in quite a variety of directions—hitting at one time some opinion prized in certain religious quarters but abhorred by secularists, and at other times hitting beliefs cherished by the latter but condemned in the former. The attempt at objectivity cannot spare, nor cater to, either orthodoxy or skepticism whether scientistic or religious. Rather, it must enter to the debit or the credit side in each case whatever seems to belong there. Notwithstanding the partisan demands from the rival camps of opinion, the portrait of truth cannot faithfully be painted in pure blacks and whites.
>
> It is hoped that the portrait of the truth about religion, which the chapters of this book offer, will be found faithful enough by puzzled hearers of the loud claims made on behalf of religion by one side and of science by the other, to be of some aid in the difficult task of apportioning allegiance intelligently to each side. The book is not an attack either on religion or on science, both of which the author believes to be of vital importance to mankind, but only on the theological imperialism and the equally imperialistic scientism, which are foreign to the essence alike of religion or of science and spring rather from human blindness, arrogance, conceit, and craving to dominate.

Warfare Between Science and Religion

> Theism and secularism are each vigorously on the aggressive today. The first urges "return to God" as the only and the sure remedy for all the ills of the time. The other sees no hope of doing away with these except through advance and application of scientific knowledge. Secularism points to all the stupidities, cruelties, and futilities which throughout recorded history have been perpetrated in the name of religion; and the protagonists of theism point, on the other side, to

> the all too patent fact that science has not given man either wisdom or virtue, but has only put into his hands unprejudiced powers; and that, armed with them, he now seems in imminent danger of destroying all he values or even his own species altogether.

A Vital Distinction

In his Introduction, Dr. Ducasse establishes a point often neglected by those unfamiliar with the theosophical position. His intent is to separate the natural philosophical concern in the possibility of immortality, and the natural ethical concern for the standards upon which an ideal life can be based from the traditional conception of a personal God. This is as important today as it was in H. P. Blavatsky's time, for the proponents of orthodox religion are fond of insisting that God and immortality, God and morality, are inseparable. Ducasse says:

> For many reasons, the author of this book finds it impossible to align himself with either of these contenders. For one thing, the tacit identification of theism, commonly with Christian monotheism, or even, a little more broadly, with monotheism in general, seems to him highly arbitrary, whether monotheism be conceived personalistically or as impersonal pantheism; for polytheism appears to be a more plausible and more defensible form of theistic belief than monotheism. Moreover, and notwithstanding the again common tacit assumption to the contrary, polytheism is not necessarily a lower form of religion than monotheism—even granting that some monotheistic conceptions may justly be ranked as morally higher than some—though not than all—polytheistic ones.
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> But further, the also widespread tacit identification of religion with theism in some form, seems historically quite indefensible, since there have been and there still are religions in which worship of a God or Gods has no part.

The Importance of Buddhism

In a subsequent chapter, again following a path of thought outlined by the pen of H. P. Blavatsky, Ducasse singles out Buddhism for attention, terming Buddhist tradition one of the most "important touchstones" for evaluation of other creeds and beliefs. "Because Buddhism," he writes, "which is one of the noblest religions of mankind and one of those which have had the widest influence, is also the outstanding instance of a religion 'atheistic' in the sense just indicated, it constitutes one of the most important touchstones by which to test the adequacy of definitions of religion that attempt to apply to all religions."

THE PHILOSOPHY OF KARMA

In a chapter dealing with Buddhism in greater detail, Ducasse introduces reincarnation and karma. His account of karma is excellent, and it is to be regretted that space limitations prevent extensive quotation. Here, however, is a sample of his analysis, in which Ducasse takes up one of the fundamental paradoxes of Buddhism:

> The relation between the man who sows in one life and the man who reaps in a later one is of essentially the same kind as that between the child and the adult. The two are the "same" person not in the sense that any item, physical or mental, in the infant's makeup has persisted unchanged and is identically present in the mature man, but only in the sense that the former has changed into the latter by a gradual transformation from hour to hour, day to day, year to year. The sameness of the two is thus sameness in the sense only of continuousness of becoming.

INDIVIDUALITY AND PERSONALITY

Dr. Ducasse's suggestive resolution of the paradox establishes a functional definition of both individuality and personality in terms of karma-rebirth theory, as follows:

> Another belief, not peculiar to Buddhism but which at first seems paradoxically inconsistent with the Buddhistic doctrine of absence of a permanent ego, is that of the "renewal of existence" referred to in the second Noble Truth—the belief, namely, that each man lives on earth not once only but again and again, his personal equipment and his external lot in each succeeding life being determined by his acts, attitudes, thoughts, and strivings in the preceding ones. How, one may well ask, is it possible to be reborn if there is no enduring soul or spirit to be reborn.
>
> The Buddhist sage Nagasena, in his conversations with King Milinda, conveys the idea by saying that the individual is "the same" at different times only in the sense in which the flame of a candle which burns throughout the night can be said to be the same flame in the last as in the first hour. Again, just as "chariot" is but the collective name for wheels, axle, body, and other parts in a certain relation to one another—not the name of something additional to all of these and "having" them—so "self" is but the name of a complex of sensations, thoughts, feelings, habits, capacities, and so on, which "has" them only in the sense in which a whole has its parts.

Ducasse continues:

> The significance of the present life of the "self" so conceived and of its preceding and succeeding lives is the contribution each makes,

through Karma, to the individual's moral, intellectual and spiritual *growth,* which eventually will culminate in emancipation from the realm of becomings. Karma is therefore to be regarded not essentially as reward and punishment, but as natural and spiritually educational consequence; just as being burned is not a punishment for touching a hot stove but a natural and educational consequence of having done so. It is true enough that one does not "learn" moral lessons from the consequences of past acts that one does not remember; but moral improvement nevertheless can result from those acts if, as the Karma doctrine assumes, they cause one, for example, to land eventually in a situation of the kind which compels or fosters development of the particular virtue, lack of which was responsible for one's having acted as he did.

Life after Death

In a chapter with this title, Ducasse continues with his investigation of the implications of reincarnation, including a summary of the efforts of John McTaggart to explain the way in which the factors of heredity and environment theory may be integrated with the doctrine of reincarnation:

> The distinguished recent British philosopher, McTaggart—who regards rebirth as the most plausible form of survival—considers the heredity explanation of innate aptitudes, and argues that the rebirth explanation of them is not incompatible with the facts of heredity. He points out that men's hats generally fit their heads far more closely than would be the case if the hats had been assigned to them at random; and yet that hats are very seldom made to order. The correspondence between head and hat "comes about by each one selecting, from hats made without any special reference to his particular head, the hat which will suit his particular head best." Similarly, McTaggart points out, "it would be possible to hold that a man whose nature had certain characteristics when he was about to be reborn, would be reborn in a body descended from ancestors of a similar character," for such a body would fit his nature better than most others. He does not suggest that the man would shop around for such a body and select it consciously, but rather that something analogous to chemical affinities might be what operates to bring the two together. The rebirth hypothesis is thus seen not to be incompatible with the facts of heredity. Indeed, it would supplement these since it would account —as heredity does not—for the cases of geniuses born in families where no such favorable antecedents as existed in the Bach family are discernible.

A Useful Textbook for Theosophists

Throughout *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion,* and in relation to every subject touched upon—including psychic phenomena, parapsychology, and Spiritualism—one finds the essential theosophical point of view represented in terms of disciplined logical philosophy. It is probable, therefore, that many students will wish to read the volume in its entirety, and possibly to own it. The last sentence of the concluding chapter provides a key to Ducasse's outlook, again reminiscent of a position established long ago in the major works of H. P. Blavatsky. "Sure facts," he writes, "instead of mere beliefs, might have the psychological leverage needed to save man from himself."

More on Legislative Issues

Lookout for June carried some discussion and communications on efforts of concerned legislators and citizens to modify the present death penalty law in California. Supporters of the bill, aware that an outright abolishment of capital punishment would not be considered favorably at this time, aimed only at an important modification. The modified bill passed in the Assembly by a 42-27 vote, but was doomed by the Senate, 11-24, May 31. (This bill would virtually abolish the death penalty in California, opponents said.)

After defeat of the bill, Assemblyman Hawkins wrote to one constituent: "I am confident that the defeat of this legislation at this Session is not a true expression of the people of California." He stated that "with a demonstration of public support, we may be able to reverse the position taken by the State Senate." Money has been voted to an Interim Committee for intensive investigation of this subject.

"The People" on Capital Punishment

In addition to the appropriation, a great deal of public support has been forthcoming, both by individuals and by various groups, in favor of the proposed legislation; and more than 16,000 people responded to KTTV's request for expressions of opinion. KTTV newscaster, George Putnam, reported the result of this poll on June 24: more than 9,000 "votes" against the death penalty; over 6,000, for.

It is indeed gratifying for those working for death penalty reform to note such support, but much more help is still needed: a perseverance which insists upon a "change in the Buddhi-Manas of the race."